



TODAY'S SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now

Nehemiah and Sanballat
Nehemiah 2:19-20, 4, 6

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What distracts you from doing what needs to be done?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Stay focused on what needs to be done.

STORY SUPPLIES

- Cardboard box wall from previous weeks
- Jar Jar Binks mask
- Darth Vader mask
- Brown hooded robe
- Black hooded robe
- Toy lightsaber

LARGE GROUP SUPPLIES

- Alien signs (made from LGV Printable)
- Paint sticks or dowel rods
- Duct tape
- Balled-up socks
- Bin
- Picture (printed or drawn) of a large alien 'mothership'

PRELUDE: Setting the tone for the experience

See the **Getting Ready** pages at the end of this document for a detailed description of what you'll need for today. In the **Prelude** folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare.

SMALL GROUP

15
MIN

SOCIAL: Providing time for fun interaction

Just for Fun
Opening Activity

LARGE GROUP

35
MIN

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- MONTHLY CHALLENGE - INITIATIVE
 - Shares stories each week with your groups that showed someone who has initiative.

WORSHIP:

- THE BEST IS YET TO COME
#9D3H7E;@FA'93D67@E

SMALL GROUP

25
MIN



WEEK
THREE
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LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

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GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now

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Nehemiah 2:19-20, 4, 6

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

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MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord.
Colossians 3:23a, NIV

MONTHLY LIFE APP

Initiative—Seeing what needs to be done and doing it

BASIC TRUTH

I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits

WORSHIP LEADER: "This is our time! It's our moment to use all that we are to praise God together. Let's use our minds, our voices, our actions, and every beat of our hearts to worship Him. Come on—lift this up!

AUDIO: THE BEST IS YET TO COME

AUDIO: GRAVES INTO GARDENS

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN (30- OR 60-SECOND VERSION)

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week, the latest video game or movie launches, back-to-school or sporting events, and so on. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

The lights dim, and music starts.

AUDIO: "SPACE BATTLE MUSIC"



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Host enters a bit frantic. He has an armful of balled-up socks. This is all done with an "I know this is fake, but let's have fun with it anyway" attitude.

OPENER

HOST: "Kids! So glad you're here today! Actually, I need your help! [Name of Environment] is under attack!"

Three leaders enter from the sides and the back, holding the "alien" pictures on sticks.

"Oh no! We're too late! The Insecti-cons from the Planet Gorgonzola have arrived! They plan to wipe us out!"

Throw the balled-up socks at the leaders, and when they are hit, they fall to the ground.

"Whew! Crisis averted . . . for now. They'll be back and in bigger numbers. Is there anyone out there brave enough to help me withstand the onslaught?"

Choose three kids to join you and give them balled-up socks. Have the leaders choose Small Groups to hold more "alien" pictures. The Leaders can spread the Small Groups around the outside of the room, encircling the Host and the three volunteers in the center.

"Arm yourselves, soldiers! Laser cannons at the ready! Now remember, they can only advance one step every five seconds—and when they get hit, they make a really, really weird sound! I hope you're ready—because here they come!"

OPTIONAL VIDEO: 5-SECOND COUNTDOWN LOOP

Every five seconds, the aliens can advance on the Host's position by one step. If they're hit with a balled-up sock, they must make a really weird sound, fall down and stop advancing. Once all of the aliens are defeated, the music stops and the Host gives a loud cheer.

"Yes! We did it! We survived!"

The lights flicker, turning off and on.

AUDIO: "OVERCHARGE"

"Oh no. What is that noise? It can't be . . . it's . . ."

Two leaders enter holding a humungous image of an alien mothership.

"It's the mothership! They've found us! Kids, give it everything you've got!"

The host and the volunteers throw all remaining balled-up socks at the mothership, peppering it with hits, until finally, after getting hit multiple times, it falls to the ground defeated. The Host leads the Large Group in a triumphant cheer.

"Woo! Let's give it up for our space soldiers! That will get your blood pumping, won't it? Let's keep it going, jump on your feet, and worship our amazing God!"



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: “Wow, that was an exciting opening! I love it when you get dropped right in the middle of the action! That makes for a pretty good story, doesn’t it?”

“It seems that every good story needs a few other things as well to become a truly great story. One is a strong hero or heroine, also known as the protagonist. Someone who struggles and grows and learns and comes out triumphant in the end. Another thing that a story needs is the opposite of that.

AUDIO: DARTH VADER BREATHING

“Recognize that sound? That’s right, kids. Every story needs a good villain, also known as the antagonist. Can you think of some really great villains?”

Pause for some responses from the Large Group.

“Ooh, those are good ones. Well, bad ones, I suppose. Those villains, those antagonists, are there to stop the hero or heroine from accomplishing their goal. If the villain can get a hero to take their focus off of their goal, they’ve succeeded!”

“What about you? Anyone ever get distracted from doing something super important? You’re trying to finish a project or clean your room but something takes your attention away? Tell me about a time when that happened!”

Pause for a few volunteers share stories.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: “Funny enough, that reminds me of a children’s book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. Has anyone ever read that one? If you give a mouse a cookie, he’s going to want some milk to go with it. Then he’ll need a straw. He’ll want to make sure he doesn’t have a milk moustache, but when looking in the mirror, he decides he needs a shave. Which means he’ll have to sweep up the fur—but he might end up sweeping up the whole house and washing the floors. Which will make him want to take a nap.”

“Wow, that mouse is distracted! What about you? Have you ever been pulled away from something you have to do, like homework, by the most random YouTube video? Have you ever been interrupted by something and you look up and you’ve wasted a whole hour? We get distracted all the time, don’t we?”

“The answer to those questions are, of course, ‘yes.’ We all get distracted—even by things that might be good for us. So how we do keep focus on what’s most important and get the job done? Great question. The cool thing is that the Bible shows us examples of this, too, and what our man of the hour Nehemiah did to block those distractions out. Let’s look!”

TRUTH

Three leaders enter. They are playing various parts, over the top, as if in a space drama, a la Star Wars.



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The leader playing Nehemiah is dressed as a Jedi.

COMMUNICATOR: "You might remember this from the past two weeks, but just in case, we've been talking about a guy from the Old Testament named Nehemiah. When he heard that his home city of Jerusalem was in trouble, he took initiative to make things right. Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem (*indicate to the broken cardboard box wall, still there from Week One*) and took a close look at the broken-down wall. He knew immediately what needed to be done.

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "*(removing his hood)* I have a bad feeling about this. I must *(waves a Jedi hand over the wall pieces)* rebuild this wall."

Leader 1 begins to clean up the wall, stack things back up, taking his time and looking at each piece thoughtfully.

COMMUNICATOR: "God moved on the hearts of the people, and they all decided to jump in and help with this massive undertaking. But while the Jewish people were excited to get started, eager to repair the walls and the burned-down gates, there were those in the surrounding lands who weren't exactly happy about what was going on.

A leader puts on a Jar Jar Binks mask.

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Mee-sa thinken this wall-buildin' is bomb-bad poo-do!"

Stand up immediately, in protest.

COMMUNICATOR: "Nope! Stop! Stop right there! Yeah, no, there's no way I'm subjecting these kids to Jar-Jar. I have my standards, you know."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Yeah, I didn't even want to read it. *(to the Large Group)* I'm ashamed."

Leader 2 exits.

COMMUNICATOR: "Ok, so, there were people in the surrounding lands that weren't so thrilled with what Nehemiah was doing with the walls.

The same leader returns in a Darth Vader mask, affecting the broad, deep voice of Darth Vader.

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "IS THIS BETTER?"

COMMUNICATOR: "Much. Back to the wall. Kids, you have to understand that a city with no walls was defenseless. Like Alderaan against the Death Star."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Ah HAH!"

COMMUNICATOR: "Like anyone against the Mandalorian."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "I haven't seen that one."



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Another leader enters in a black hooded robe like The Emperor. He affects a slow, old, drawn out, raspy voice.

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "I find your lack of Disney Plus . . . disturbing."

COMMUNICATOR: "The villains, the antagonists of this story, are (*indicate to each*) two guys named Sanballat and Tobiah. Sanballat was a Horonite, and Tobiah was an official from Ammon. Both of those surrounding groups didn't want Jerusalem to be strong. These guys stood off to the side, poking at Nehemiah and tossing out verbal jabs at every moment."

Leaders 2 and 3 comically make their way over to Leader 1. They're super annoying.

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Hey."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Hey, you."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Have you ever heard of the tragedy of Darth Plagueis the Wise?"

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Hey."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Stop what you are doing."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Pathetic."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Why even start?"

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "You'll never finish."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "I have foreseen it."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Are you trying to take the king's throne?"

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): (*suddenly animated*) "Do it! Take my lightsabre! Strike me down and release your ANGAH!"

Leader 1 looks up for a brief moment and then turns back to fixing the wall.

COMMUNICATOR: "Nehemiah kept his cool. Instead of fighting back or giving in to these really annoying people—"

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Watch it, sonny!"

COMMUNICATOR: "—he simply said,"

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "We serve God. And He will help us rebuild these walls."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Obi-Wan has taught you well."



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LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): *(still overly animated, holding out a toy lightsaber)* "Do it! Strike me down and your journey to the dark side will be COMPLETE!"

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "Ookay, I'm getting back to work."

Leader 1 turns around and continues rebuilding the wall. Leaders 2 & 3 comically walk back to where they started.

COMMUNICATOR: "Nehemiah knew he couldn't get this job done without God's help. It was too big of a task. One thing he did in the meantime, though, was to take a look at all of the helpers and assign them to individual jobs around the city. That meant that no one person was doing a bulk of the work, but lots of people were working together. The problem with that? Not many people were actual builders. They had priests, nobles, goldsmiths, perfume makers, farmers, grape growers, shepherds . . . but not a lot of builders."

"To make it a bit easier, Nehemiah had each family group work on a section of the wall closest to their own home."

Leader 1 gets a few kids from the Large Group to help him rebuild the cardboard box wall.

"Every age, men, women, even kids, they all were helping rebuild the wall. And in a short amount of time, the walls started to look less like piles of rubble and more like walls again."

"Sanballat and Tobiah couldn't even believe it. They were shocked."

LEADERS 2 & 3: "We're shocked!"

COMMUNICATOR: "They started in again, openly mocking anyone who was working on the wall."

Leaders 2 & 3 comically make their way over to Leader 1 and the kid volunteers working on the wall.

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Hey."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Hey, shorty."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "That looks like garbage!"

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "If a fox ran across that, I bet it would tumble over!"

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "You're no Jedi! *(to one of the kids, talking loudly and thrusting the lightsaber out)* DO IT! TAKE MY WEAPON! STRIKE ME DOWN AND RELEASE YOUR ANGAH!"

COMMUNICATOR: "But they all ignored them again. Instead of losing focus, Nehemiah kept working. And he prayed."

Open the Bible to Nehemiah 4:4-5 and read as Leaders 2 & 3 comically walk back to where they started.



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“Our God, please listen to our prayer. Some people hate us. They’re saying bad things about us. So, let others say bad things about them. Let them be carried off like stolen goods. Let them be taken to another country as prisoners. Don’t hide your eyes from their guilt. Don’t forgive their sins. They have said bad things about the builders.”

“And the people kept working and working and working! The wall was now halfway done!”

“This did NOT sit well with Sanballat and Tobiah. They needed a plan.”

LEADERS 2 & 3: *“We need a plan.”*

COMMUNICATOR: *“They began to plot and scheme with the surrounding nations to attack Jerusalem before the wall could be finished.”*

Leaders 2 & 3 walk out among the Large Group, trying to get people to help them—but don’t actually choose any volunteers here.

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): *“Anyone want to join the Empire? See the galaxy?”*

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): *“We have great dental insurance!”*

COMMUNICATOR: *“But Nehemiah caught wind of their plans and stationed guards to surround the wall and defend the workers.”*

Leader 1 gathers more kid volunteers and stations them between Leaders 2 & 3 and the wall.

“They stood guard and built, built and stood guard. From that day forward, workers on the wall brought weapons with them—a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other.”

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): *“(to Leader 3) I thought you had a plan to stop them!”*

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): *“(to Leader 2) My plan was the Death Star, and we all know how that turned out!”*

Leader 1 and the kid volunteers now work to actually finish the wall, completely rebuilding it to the same look as Week One.

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): *“God will fight for us! Let’s finish this wall!”*

COMMUNICATOR: *“Nehemiah and the Jewish people worked day and night until finally . . . the wall was finished! Let’s hear it for Nehemiah and the workers!”*

Lead the Large Group in cheers and have the kid volunteers head back to their seats. Nehemiah stays and finishes up one last part of the wall.

COMMUNICATOR: *“Nehemiah and the workers had one last job to do—the gates. So they set forth to finish this one last part. Sanballat and Tobiah? They weren’t finished either. They were furious.”*



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LEADERS 2 & 3: "We are furious!"

COMMUNICATOR: "They even tried a few last tricks on Nehemiah."

Leaders 2 & 3 comically make their way over to Leader 1.

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Hey."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Hey, you."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Let's have a meeting, over in one of the far-off villages where no one will hear you scream—I MEAN—where we can talk without anyone hearing."

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "Yeah, I don't think so."

COMMUNICATOR: "Nehemiah stayed focused on finishing up. Four more times Sanballat sent messages to try to get Nehemiah to stop."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "There's a sale at Old Navy."

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "No."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "Look! A parade of dwarves juggling other dwarves!"

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "No."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "The King of Persia called! He said you're fired!"

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "You might as well give up. I have the high ground."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "(waving a hand) This is not the wall you're looking for."

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "No."

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): Shoot, that usually works . . ."

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): "Bring out the last resort!"

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): "(putting on a Jar Jar Binks mask) Mee-sa no like-en dis wally, mee-sa big bomb-bad poo-do!"

LEADER 1 (AS NEHEMIAH): "I actually thought Jar Jar wasn't that bad in the first movie."

LEADERS 2 & 3: "(dramatically) Gasp!"



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COMMUNICATOR: “Through all of the tricks, the ones where Sanballat and Tobiah tried to make Nehemiah look bad, the ones where they told him a friend wanted to meet him—Nehemiah saw right through them all. And on the 52nd day . . .”

Leader 1 puts the finishing touches on the wall, brushes his hands together, and folds his arms across his chest, proud of a job well done.

LEADERS 2 & 3: “(over the top) NOOOOOOOOOOOOOooooooooooooo!”

COMMUNICATOR: “. . . the wall was completely finished. It had been completed in record time by a group of ordinary, everyday people. It was clear to everyone that God had helped Nehemiah and the Jews stay focused and finish strong.”

Leaders 2 & 3 move to leave.

LEADER 2 (AS SANBALLAT): “That’s it. I’m going to work with Darth Maul. At least he doesn’t talk that much.”

LEADER 3 (AS TOBIAH): “Good luck! I’m off to ruin the next three movies!”

Leaders 2 & 3 comically exit.

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “Please put your hands together for these wonderful leaders!”

“Kids, I’m not sure if it’s the same for you, but Nehemiah was interrupted and distracted at every turn. There were lots of things that could’ve taken his attention away. He could’ve felt completely overwhelmed by all the work and by the challenges he and the people had to face . . . but he led them to stay focused and trust God.”

“And I think that’s the key takeaway here—he trusted God. God’s faithful, and He can give us the strength to finish His work. When distractions came, Nehemiah stayed focused and prayed to God.”

“Nehemiah stayed, and Nehemiah prayed.”

“When there’s something you need to do, don’t let random things distract you. Don’t let people who are making unwise choices distract you. Ask God for help, and trust that He will give it!”

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: “As you head to your Small Groups, think about this question:”

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

“What distracts you from doing what needs to be done? What are the things that you know you can’t have around when trying to do something like homework? How can you recognize when something is just an interruption, versus something that’s really important? You’ll work to answer these questions and more in your Small Group, but before we head there, let’s pray.”



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Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP